

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1916.—Copyright, 1916, by the Sun Printing and Publishing Association.

BRITISH NAVY AMERICA'S BULWARK
SAYS BERESFORD

By EDWARD MARSHALL.

WHEN I met Lord Charles Beresford in London I asked him to suggest to me what he thought might have been the most desirable course for the United States to follow from the outset with regard to the European war, and he refused.

"I try never to give advice to any nation except my own," said he, "and surely I never would venture to give advice to one as intelligent and as capable of judging for itself as the United States. Every country is the best judge of its own affairs."

"Therefore, even assuming that I had ideas as to what America might have done after the outbreak of the war, or as to what she now might wisely do other than that which she is doing, I still should decline to answer that particular query. That sort of talk from a resident of one country about the actual or possible procedure of another country never tends to promote good feeling, and no subject of the British Empire can have any desire to promote anything except good feeling between his country and yours."

"I am willing, however, to make definite statements with regard to certain matters concerning which there seems to have been disagreement between some American citizens and some British citizens. Of course in view of my lifelong interest in the British navy I am especially willing to speak about our sea power, what it has done in our warfare with Germany and the part it has played in our relationship with the United States since the war began."

"First I feel perfectly free to declare and perfectly certain of the accuracy of my statement when I do declare that British sea power has not oppressed the United States nor any citizen or citizens of the United States since this war began."

"A good deal of talk has emanated from Germany and from Germans in the United States which has held 'British navalism' to be comparable with German militarism in tyranny and injustice. The Germans as a whole have condemned our so-called 'navalism' as we condemn their militarism."

"As a matter of fact there is no real foundation for argument of that sort. The two things are not at all rightfully comparable."

"The mastery of the sea as created by Britain before the war and as demonstrated very successfully during the progress of the war not only has been a means to and a protection of our existence as an empire but has been essential to the preservation, not of a British monopoly of the seas (as Germany would urge) but to the preservation of the freedom of the seas to all—to us, to you, and for that matter to Germany herself."

"While we have held this mastery of the seas there has been no commercial oppression, no exclusions from any ocean (save that exclusion of the central European Powers which they themselves precipitated when they precipitated this great war) of any nation's shipping. Admitting for the sake of argument that Britain has dominated the seas commercially as she has in a naval sense, yet all must still admit that she has dominated through fair competition in ocean trade."

"British 'navalism' has meant fair competition on the highways of the sea, whereas German militarism, if in some nightmare era of the future it should become as dominant, inevitably would mean the complete destruction of liberal civilization, the rights of small nations and the happiness of the world. In other words, it would put a killing handicap upon the progress of humanity."

"I cannot see that there is any necessity for me to dilate on this point at this stage of events. Since the beginning of this war the world abundantly has been shown what German domination means on land. Wherever the Germans go small nations and the rights of the citizens of small nations disappear, wiped out by the brutal and inhuman practices of German militarism, which openly avows the policy of doing just that."

"Any prophet of its procedure in the unbelievable case that it should achieve the mastery of the seas would be forced to base his prophecies upon what it has done upon land, and would find them far too dreadful to contemplate with calm, even as mere prophecies."

"In such a dire event the world's commerce would not be as it was before the war, free to whosoever might fairly compete successfully for it, as all legitimate trade should be; it would become exclusively German—the trade of every other nation would be destroyed. Abundant evidence from

their own lips, from the pens of their best known and politically most highly inspired writers is at hand upon this subject for any one who cares to examine.

"German leaders intended, if they won the war, to dominate the whole world's trade and to maintain that domination by means other than open competition with the nations of the world. They meant to maintain it by force. This Britain never has done."

"I asked Lord Charles now to explain to me the action of the British Government with regard to the ocean commerce of neutrals since the war began, calling his attention to the fact that many in America whose sympathies upon the broad questions involved in the war certainly cannot truthfully be called pro-German believe that England persistently has violated the rights of neutral shipping. I explained to him that, as of course he already knew, even the least pro-German newspapers in the United States have felt themselves called upon from time to time to express the keenest regret and displeasure over the course which the British Government has taken with regard to cargoes and bottoms from America upon the high seas."

"Lord Charles, who knows maritime law as well, in all human probability, as any other man alive to-day, nodded almost as if in agreement with the American critics of Great Britain. I have noted since I have been in England this time that Englishmen as a whole are very ready to criticize their fellow countrymen, are no less ready to accept criticism of themselves up to the point at least of giving it a most respectful and tolerably thoughtful hearing. I have heard more criticism of Great Britain, as a matter of fact, in England than I ever have heard in the United States or than has come to me from any of the other countries of Europe."

"The difficult position at which we now have arrived with regard to neutrals," he granted, "is of quite our own making. We alone must be blamed for it. I hold the 'wait and see' policy of the British Government responsible for it."

"Our procedure has lacked decision. We should have taken action promptly when the war began, but we did not do so."

"Every man of sense, certainly every Briton, wants to see this war ended as soon as possible. When we began we all were anxious to see it end as soon as possible. It seems absurd to devote words to the statement of so obvious a fact."

"By following a course which we did not follow, unhappily for all concerned, we might have hastened its ending. That is my unalterable belief and I do not fear that I ever shall change it. Without violation of the law of nations and with extreme good sense we might have declared and maintained an effective blockade, making contraband of everything shipped to or in directly going into Germany."

"Every neutral nation in the world would have accepted that, even though they might have protested against it. Effective blockade and the declaration of contraband of war are understood. They have been recognized as legal war time measures in all parts of the world."

"You yourselves not only have recognized this practice, but you yourselves have followed it. It is possible that I am wrong in my contention, but this surely is my view. Let me give you an example of your utilization of this idea."

"Cotton exportation has an intimate and important effect upon the prosperity of American trade. I am told and believe, although I myself cannot vouch for the statement, that directly we went to war your Government at Washington notified the cotton growing States of your South, in effect, that we British were morally certain to make cotton contraband of war, as such action on the part of the British Government had an undeniable precedent in the procedure of the American Federal Government when during your civil war your Government at Washington made cotton contraband of war."

"But whether or not your Government actually warned your cotton growing States that such action by the British authorities was a probability the fact remains that it should not only have been a probability but a certainty, and that had it been taken you could have had no valid cause for complaint."

"It would have had a definite preced-

English Sea Power Stands for True Freedom of the Seas, German Militarism for World Domination, Is His Message to the United States



LORD CHARLES BERESFORD.
As he appeared recently at the memorial service for Edith Cavell in St. Paul's.

dent in the procedure of your own Government during your civil war when the North made cotton contraband, thus stopping all the British mills, one of Britain's most important industries, and ruining many of the great Lancashire spinners. Had it not been for the munificence of our own people we at that time should have seen hundreds of thousands of people starving in England."

"This fact cannot be denied, and my information has been that, basing its prognostication upon it, your Washington Government at the outbreak of this European war officially or unofficially strongly advised your Southern planters not to pin their faith to cotton but to put in other crops."

"Another statement has been made to me which bears out this idea, and that is that not only chambers of commerce throughout the Southern American States but several of your State agricultural departments, if not your Federal Agricultural Department, advised preparation for the disaster of contraband cotton by the preparation of the land for other crops."

"The fair dealing and straight running of the American people was shown in this wise: as the British Government never had complained against the American Government for making cotton contraband at the time of your civil war, although its people suffered with terrible severity as the result of

your action, they argued that the American people would say nothing in protest, but would calmly smile and endure if in this war the British Government took similar action."

"There was even more reason in our case than there was in yours for making cotton contraband, for the advances of science and the consequent alteration in the formulae for the manufacture of explosives has added a vital argument which did not then exist to those in the minds of any one belligerent nation for exclusion of cotton from the imports of its adversary belligerent."

"Cotton was not then, but now is, absolutely necessary to the manufacture of high explosive compounds; and it is no less necessary now than then to the manufacture of clothing for the troops and other essentials of successful campaigning. It emphatically is, and this cannot be denied, far more now than then a definite munition of war."

"But Great Britain's action was by no means instantaneous. It was so far from that when it at last came it was not all effective."

"Sir William Ramsay, myself and a few others, with a large proportion of the peers, worked for eight months and a half, carrying on an agitation as earnest as we could make it, before we finally succeeded in getting the British Government to make cotton

contraband. By the time we had accomplished this result Germany had succeeded in importing from you all or nearly all of the commodity which she required for a period of at least one year."

"This German importation of American cotton was, for us, a very serious matter. Every cargo of American cotton which reached Germany meant a certain number of days of prolongation of the war, at a cost to Great Britain of 15,000,000 (\$25,000,000) a day and thousands of British soldiers' lives lost."

"To my mind the saddest error made by Great Britain in the conduct of the war was the fact that the British navy was not allowed by the Government to grip Germany by the throat, as it were, at the very beginning of hostilities. If it had been permitted to do that, which it was very well able to do, the war would have been ended long ere this."

"As we did not take the course which we should have taken at the outset of the war the American Government raised difficulties when we finally tardily made up our minds to take it. Strongly determined action along the lines which we ought to have followed, and which there is such good reason to believe that America expected us to follow, at the very beginning would have caused slight comment and no real resentment in the United States."

"Our present position of difficulty, which makes it necessary for us to

make what are called arrangements and agreements with certain neutral nations, including, for example, Denmark, is the result of our procrastination at the start. Had we acted more sensibly an infinite number of negotiations would have been unnecessary which have been very necessary indeed as things have stood."

"A completely efficient blockade and the declaration as contraband of everything designed to help in the manufacture of munitions or give comfort to Germany would have settled everything without any serious trouble. But failing to realize this, or at least failing to accomplish it, we drifted into trouble."

"We have decreed, and have been able to enforce our decree through our mastery of the seas, that neutral nations shall be 'rationed.' That is, that at least those which especially trade with Germany shall not import into their territory more supplies than they were in the custom of importing before the war began. Obviously this is to prevent the export to our enemies from neutral importing nations of supplies of whatever kind which that enemy may need."

"The amount of allowed imports being limited under this 'rationing' arrangement, we can rest assured that the nation nearest to the neutral nation in which the port of import is situated will get the benefit of the importation and that our enemies will not get the benefit of it."

"In all trading agreements or proposals the date of delivery is most important. Naturally the countries nearest to Germany will get the German trade. From this complication may arise. It may be that I, a Briton, should be among the first, if not the first, to call attention to this fact."

"Is it not possible that in the future, after the war, those neutral nations who by this arrangement have been prohibited from trading with Germany, such nations, for example, as the United States and Spain, may say to us:

"Great Britain used her mastery of the sea while she was fighting Germany to the advantage of a favored few and to the detriment of the great mass of neutrals who were too far off successfully to compete under the regulations which she had down?"

"Thus, while I have called attention to the fact that all nations understood and understand the law of blockade and contraband of war, and while I acknowledge that the difficulties of the situation became great at once after the outbreak of the war, I maintain that we ourselves created many of them."

"International law as a whole included the Declaration of Paris (but not that of London) and the United States was not even bound by what, according to our reading, it did include, for from the first she refused to agree to it. The Declaration of Paris, 1856, dealt with neutral flags covering enemy goods."

"Therefore the United States would not have been in a position to object to the declaration of contraband cotton, and furthermore, she would not have objected, as was evidenced by the expectations of her State and her Federal Agricultural departments and her chambers of commerce to which I already have alluded."

"Our Order in Council of March 11, 1915, abrogated the Declaration of Paris of 1856, the fourteen Hague conventions of 1907 and the Declaration of London of 1908."

"To prove this I have but to call attention to the fact that on the 1st of March, 1915, the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons: 'Her opponents' (meaning by 'her opponents' those of Germany, in other words the Allies), 'have been driven to frame retaliatory measures in order, in their turn, to prevent commodities of any kind from reaching or leaving the German Empire.'"

"In only one way could that have been made effective, and that would have been by means of an efficient blockade and the declaration of absolute contraband."

"America is well aware that Great Britain cannot blockade neutral ports and our difficulty has arisen with Denmark and Holland, who match boundary frontiers with Germany. But under that Order in Council, as the Declaration of Paris, 1856, had been abrogated, we should have been entitled to search for enemy goods under neutral flags. That would have placed Denmark and Holland in a different and difficult position with Germany."

"As things were we could not land an army, owing to the difficulties of

our situation, and as our natural sympathy for small nations, such as Denmark and Holland, influenced us, we allowed an enormous amount of raw material used in the manufacture of munitions and other commodities to go into Germany, enabling her to continue the war."

"We had to remember, and to do what we could by our forbearance to prevent a repetition in Denmark and Holland of that German brutality toward small nations which oppose her wishes of which the world already has had sufficiently terrible exemplification in the case of Belgium, Serbia, Holland and Montenegro."

"Had we done, at first, with the favored few whom we left alone, what we ought to have done and what we afterward did, we never would have had the difficulties with neutrals which since so have troubled us."

"I asked Lord Charles to express himself definitely concerning the American attitude and to estimate for me the general British sentiment toward the United States."

"I believe that I know America," said he. "I have been many times in your country and have travelled with an observant eye. I am satisfied that the sentiment of America as a whole is with the Allies."

"Great Britain, France and Russia are fighting for liberty and for civilization, and these have been the chief aspirations of the American republic since its beginning."

"Many side issues have arisen to confuse the situation in America and there are many Germans among your population, but I am convinced that the great heart of the American people beats as ours is beating."

"We in Britain believe in your friendship for us. There can be no question whatsoever of the friendship of the British people for you, who are our cousins in America. France, your sister republic, surely is your friend, and Italy and Russia despite your disagreements with the latter nation not so many years ago regard you with both respect and admiration."

"British friendship to you is and has been most pronounced. To me it seems incredible that any portion of the American public could so misunderstand any detail of our procedure as to think it indicative of sympathy with any one's unfriendliness toward you, granting for the sake of argument that any one has unfriendly feelings toward you."

"Early in the war Lord Charles had said that he attributed Germany's attacks upon ships carrying American citizens to a desire to have America enter the war on the side of the Allies, thinking that she could be of little benefit in fighting, and that if she entered she would be so absorbed by preparations that she would be unable to supply the Allies with munitions. I asked him if he had had cause to change this view."

"No," he replied. "I still maintain that there were and are reasons why Germany might have been and might still be glad to have America join hands with the Allies in open hostility to her. America would be a great asset to Germany during peace negotiations. America has not suffered with the Allies from this war."

"In the last analysis," I asked "what will be gained to the progress of the world by that victory of the Allies of which you feel so sure?"

"We are fighting this great war," Lord Charles replied, "so that from it peace may come. Only the complete destruction of Prussian militarism can make anything like permanent peace possible in Europe."

"The war must be fought through to a finish. It is this which we are most anxious to have all Americans understand. To those who know the truth of things the necessities for this cannot fail to be clear. If your philanthropic countryman, Henry Ford had understood the truth about the situation he would have been as anxious as we are for a victory for the Allies and never would have tried to stop the war without a decisive victory in our favor. In that way only can be permanent peace."

"We all want a peaceful world. It never can be achieved except through the complete destruction of Prussian militarism."

"We are certain that a premature peace would mean nothing but another war ere long, possibly within twenty or thirty years, and possibly even sooner than that. Complete victory for the Allies may not transform the warring world into a world which ever shall remain at peace, but it will do more than any other one thing could to insure the lapse of many years before humanity in Europe can be read again by strife."